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INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 001151

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/13/2018  
TAGS: [MOPS](#) [IZ](#) [PINS](#) [PINR](#) [PGOV](#)  
SUBJECT: REO BASRAH SITREP 12 APRIL 2008

REF: BASRAH 28

Classified By: REO Director Hal Howard for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (U) This is a Basrah REO situation report for April 12, 12008.

12. (S//REL ACGU) Summary: The ISF commenced "Operation Charge of the Knights II" on April 12, targeting remaining JAM strongholds in Basrah. There has been limited resistance from small arms fire and IED screens. Basrah Operations Commander LTG Mohan received a letter from the PM's office ordering him to report to Baghdad, and he is expected to be replaced by MG Abdel Aziz al-Ubaydi. The cash payments the GOI is offering under its weapons turn-in program are lower than the black market value of the weapons and may be contributing to the poor public response to the program. Economic disruptions are limited and localized although local prices remain at 100 percent over their pre-battle levels. Operations at the Port of Umm Qasr are proceeding normally under ISF control. End Summary.

Operation Charge of the Knights II  
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13. (S//REL ACGU) On the morning of April 12, the ISF commenced "Operation Charge of the Knights II" to sweep the JAM strongholds of Qibla and Timiniyah for illegal, heavy weapons in Qibla (main effort) and Timiniyah. In preparation of today's offensive, ISF units have isolated the Qibla, Hyyaniyah, and Timiniyah neighborhoods for several days and yesterday set up blocking operations along the major routes into the city and across the Shatt al-Arab waterway to prevent lethal aid being smuggled into the city. Once areas are cleared, the IA will hold, reconsolidate, and distribute humanitarian assistance. Initially, IP units were tasked to hold cleared ground, but early reporting indicates there is no IP involvement in the current operation, possibly due to their unreliability and weakened state after last month's desertions and the resulting purges of disloyal personnel. There has been limited resistance aside from occasional small arms fire and IED screens. In Qibla, vehicles with loud speakers are announcing that medium and heavy weapons left outside the door of a house will exempt it from search. By 1900, two weapons caches and an IED factory have been discovered. A single source report claims that JAM is sending reinforcements into Hyyaniyah to possibly counter clearing operations there.

14. (S//REL ACGU) Comment: We assess that this operation has been better organized than the preceding iteration; there has been more time to plan and U.S. advisors are having a positive effect on the planning process. That said, sources in the BOC tell us that LTG Mohan has politely listened to advisors only to ignore recommendations and he refuses to share many operational details with his own staff and the Coalition. End Comment.

LTG Mohan Dismissed as BOC Commander

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15. (S//REL ACGU) Basrah Operations Commander, LTG Mohan Hafith Fahad, called REO Basrah today (April 12) informing us that he was given a letter from the Prime Minister's Office dismissing him from his current position and requesting him to report to Baghdad. Initial indications are that MOD's Director of Military Movements, MG Abdel Aziz al-Ubaydi, will replace Mohan. In fact, Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki initially fired and replaced Mohan with Abdel Aziz when Maliki arrived in Basrah on April 24 to initiate Operation Charge of the Knights against the militias. But by the third day of the operation, Mohan had re-secured his position.

16. (S//REL ACGU) Mohan's tenure as Basrah's ISF commander has been on rocky ground for some time, but his close association with MinDef Abd al-Qadir al-Mufriji, as well as UK intervention, have protected him. British sources tell us that in the past they were opposed to replacing Mohan fearing a substitute might be worse and to maintain the course of UK strategic planning for Basrah province. UK relations with Mohan soured during the operation due to a lack of agreement on what British support would be provided. Mohan has also been sharply criticized by NSA Muwafaq al-Rubaie, Chief of the Defense Staff Babakir Zebari, and Dawa Party members in Basrah for supporting the UK strategy to deal with the Jaysh al-Mahdi and for not being aggressive enough in asserting GOI control. Mohan's final undoing appears to be his general lack of strategic and tactical planning, which was woefully exposed during Operation Charge of the Knights. US and UK military sources told us that GOI senior leadership was waiting for the first phase of Basrah operations to end before replacing Mohan.

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#### Poor Response to Weapons Turn-In Program

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17. (C//REL ACGU) The turn-in program for illegal medium and heavy weapons continued beyond PM Maliki's March 8 deadline due to poor organization and disappointing results. Failing to inform citizens in a timely manner on how to hand over weapons and organize the collection process resulted in poor turnout and forced the GOI to continue encouraging Basrawis to comply. However, as the news of impending house-to-house searches spread, increased numbers of arms have been reportedly abandoned on the streets, in garbage bins and sewers, and thrown into the river. Despite this encouraging sign, several sources tell us that these abandoned weapons are mostly small arms from average citizens fearing the ISF will arrest them at the collection points. Militia members, we are told, are refusing to hand in their heavier weapons.

18. (C//REL ACGU) Several sources have confirmed the prices the GOI is offering for weapons are less than the weapon's resale value on the black market, which may have contributed to the low turn-in rates. For example, an AK-47 has a black market value of USD 420 but the GOI is offering only the equivalent of USD 120. In comparison, a local tribal leader claimed that during the former regime's DDR program, the government bought AK-variants at four times the black market price.

#### Sons of Basrah Tribal Initiative

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19. (S//REL ACGU) REO Director briefly met Acting Justice Minister Safa al-Safi, who leads the GOI's recent tribal initiative in southern Iraq, at Basrah Palace on April 12. Safi told the Director that the program was "changing every day," the GOI was trying to form smaller tribal committees in local areas, and confirmed that the program will be partially funded by the USD 100 million recently promised by PM Maliki for Basrah's development. Multi-National Division ) South East reporting indicates that there are up to 300 tribesmen

assisting the Al Mithar police station in the rural area north of Basrah Air Station. This would be an addition to the previously reported tribal battalion operating in the Tannumah and Shatt al-Arab districts (reftel).

#### Availability of Consumer Products

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¶10. (C//REL ACGU) Economic disruptions in the city have so far been limited and localized. Delivery of humanitarian assistance has not yet been necessary. The security operations disrupt the movement of Basrawis, making travel to markets for food and potable water more difficult, but local NGO and aid agency contacts report that movement remains normal outside of the neighborhoods where operations are taking place. Local contacts also indicate that most Basrawis have used the two-week interlude in kinetic operations to stockpile essentials. Acute shortages of food and potable water, even in the immediately affected areas, should not materialize for at least the first 72 hours, should the present operations persist.

¶11. (C//REL ACGU) Local contacts report that markets are generally well stocked and open for normal business hours in areas not immediately affected by the current operations. Hyyanayah, Jameat, and Qibla do not have access to Basrah's main water system and ordinarily rely on aid agencies for some essential goods and services, such as delivery of potable water. MND-SE civil affairs staff, augmented by the MNC-I Civil Military Operations Center (CMOC), have plans in place to coordinate with the ISF delivery of humanitarian assistance to areas cordoned off or otherwise affected by kinetic operations. MND-SE and CMOC have stored 144,000 family food rations and 380,000 liters of water on the Basrah Air Station and an additional 19,000 food rations and 380,000 liters of water stored at Shaibah.

#### Consumer Prices

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¶12. (C//REL ACGU) Consumer prices had eased somewhat from their peaks in the middle of the "Battle of Basrah". Prices remained roughly 100 percent over their pre-battle levels as of April 8. Local contacts advise that acute stockpiling in the lead-up to the second, current round of operations has caused prices to spike again.

#### Transportation Infrastructure

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¶13. (C//REL ACGU) Contacts at the Port of Umm Qasr (PUQ) advise that operations are proceeding normally. Iraqi Army (IA) control of the port has maintained the facility's

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security. Civilian air operations continued at reduced traffic rates on April 12, with five passenger flights. Military and civilian airfreight flights are proceeding at greater than normal levels. A general traffic ban at land points of entry--e.g., Shalamsha, on the Iranian border--continues in place, with an exception for food imports.  
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